

Joe Bustillos
Daily Titan
41 lines

movie review: 'Blackout' (Ambient Light Entertainment)

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(There is no doubt in my mind that first-time director Doug Adams and "Psycho" screenwriter Joseph Stefano have given us the worst film of 1989.

(Granted, horror films are not known for their intelligent characters ("Gee, Caroline, do you think the screwdriver-wielding mass murderer is hiding in the attic? Leave the flashlight there and let's go see," they always seem to say), but Adams and Stefano have managed to combine brain-dead characters, laughable idiotic dialogue, and a plot that is at the same time muddled and predictable. (By the time I found out who the murderer was, I was more interested in how the writers, for the millionth time, were going to conveniently get a screwdriver into his grimy palms. This movie was a real hoot.

For those foolishly interested in "Blackout"'s "wickedly twisted" story-line revolves around a young woman's partial and violent memories. These flashbacks resurface when she returns home in response to a call for help that she received in a letter from her long-lost father.

Caroline Boyle (Gail O'Grady) had run away from home four- years before, no doubt because of the cruel treatment that she received at the hands of her beautiful but cruel mother (Carol Lynley). Boyle's father had disappeared 10-years before that under mysterious circumstances that have some connection to Caroline's violent flashbacks. But the cryptic letter gave no indication about where her father might be or what kind of help he might need. When no one in town confesses to having seen the man, Caroline wonders, "Could he be up in the attic?" And before you can say "blood-bath" people are falling down stairs, screwdrivers are finding their pointed way into peoples' bodies, and Caroline's old boyfriend wants to relieve her of her virginity.

A little trite
Without sounding like I condone the use of mind-altering chemicals, I would caution against viewing this laughable film unless heavily fortified by above-mentioned substances. A better choice would be to stay at home to watch reruns of "Gilligan" Island."

"Blackout" opens Friday (the 13th of October, are you getting scared yet?) at the AMC 14 Theaters in Century City.

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"Blackout"'s "wickedly twisted" storyline revolves around a young woman's partial and violent memories. These flashbacks resurface when she returns home in response to a call for help that she received in a letter from her long-lost father. Caroline Boyle (Gail O'Grady) had run away from home four-years before, no doubt because of the cruel treatment that she received at the hands of her beautiful but cruel mother (Carol Lynley). Boyle's father had disappeared 10-years before that under mysterious circumstances that have some connection to her violent flashbacks. But the cryptic letter gives no indication about where her father might be or what kind of help he might need. When no one in town confesses to having seen the man Caroline wonders, "Could he be up in the attic?" And before you can say "blood-bath" people are falling down stairs, screwdrivers are finding their pointed way into peoples' bodies, and Boyle's old boyfriend wants to relieve her of her virginity.

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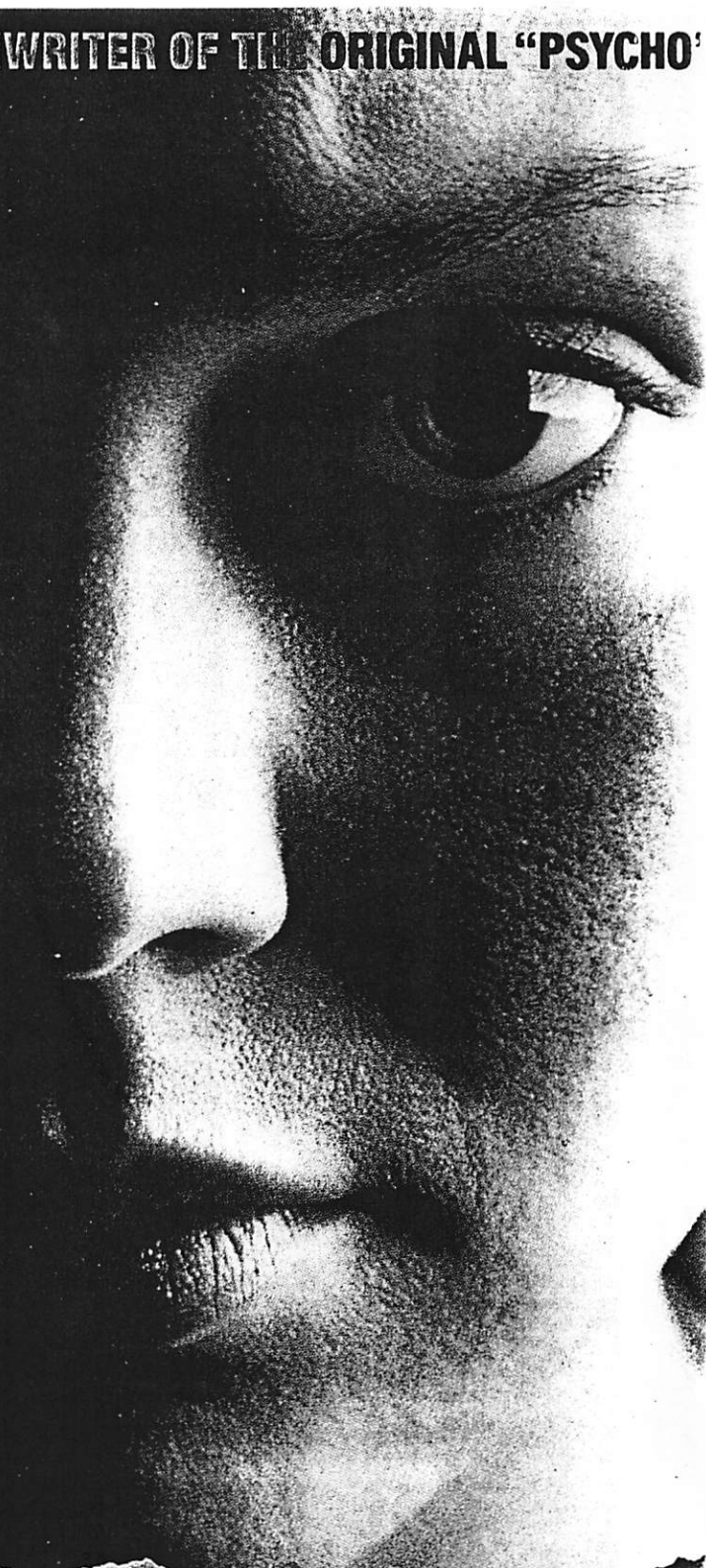
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FROM THE SCREENWRITER OF THE ORIGINAL "PSYCHO"

BLACKOUT

SOME
MEMORIES
ARE
BETTER LEFT
BURIED...



BLACKOUT

AMBIENT LIGHT ENTERTAINMENT PRESENTS A DOUG ADAMS FILM "BLACKOUT"
STARRING CAROL LYNLEY · GAIL O'GRADY · MICHAEL KEYS HALL · JOSEPH GIAN AND JOANNA MILES AS ELEANOR
EDITOR ZACH STAENBERG MUSIC BY DON DAVIS DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY ARLEDGE ARMENAKI
SCREENPLAY BY JOSEPH STEFANO ASSOCIATE PRODUCER ZACH STAENBERG LINE PRODUCER HERMAN GRIGSBY
PRODUCED BY DOUG ADAMS AND JOSEPH STEFANO DIRECTED BY DOUG ADAMS

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BLACKOUT-Synopsis

Caroline Boyle, a beautiful, 21 year old runaway, is lured into her troubled past when she receives a letter from her father who disappeared 14 years earlier. Answering his desperate plea for help, she returns to the tiny farm community of Santa Paula, CA. Cautiously entering her childhood home, she is confronted by her hostile, gun-toting mother Esther.

In town, she meets Luke, the boyfriend she left behind 4 years earlier, and her best friend Angela. At Angela's house, her mother Eleanor takes Caroline aside and confesses that Caroline's father was her sweetheart. "He loved you so, Caroline... how could he leave you without saying good-bye? ... He couldn't have... Not if he left that house alive!" Eleanor insists.

Caroline returns to her home, where she shares a happy reunion with her uncle Alan, Esther's brother, who is angered over the vague, cryptic letter; he hasn't seen or heard from her father in 14 years.

That night, Eleanor is found unconscious in her ransacked room and rushed to the hospital. Later, during a romantic interlude with Luke, Caroline is flooded with violent flashbacks and in a hysterical panic stabs him repeatedly with a screwdriver.

"Oh my god, not again!" her mother screams when Caroline tells her what happened. Esther then relates the sordid tale of how seven-year-old Caroline fatally stabbed her father as he tried to molest her. "I buried him out in the grove one night when Alan was away" Esther confesses. "Pack your bags and go back where you came from." But Caroline is too stunned to move... she innocently accepts a

glass of drug-laced milk from her mother. Later, Caroline awakes in a drugged state to the sounds of violent sex in the attic. She bolts from the house, hallucinating, and looks up to see her mother making love to an unseen man in the attic window.

Eleanor awakens from a coma in the hospital and tells Angela she was attacked. She orders Angela to go and get Caroline out of the house before she winds up like her father... dead.

Angela, who cannot reach Caroline by phone, goes to the ranch to warn Caroline and is drawn up into the attic by the sound of a whimpering girl. As she peers in, she is smashed over the head and stabbed by a screwdriver-wielding assassin. She tries to flee, but impales herself in the attic window.

The next day, Caroline is packing to leave when Alan enters. "Did you find your father?" he asks. "How could I? He's dead! I killed him... she told me!" Caroline screams. Alan, baffled and frightened, says that he suspects Esther killed her husband and pinned the murder on Caroline. He turns to leave, then freezes in horror... "but if your father's buried out in that orange grove, who wrote you that letter!" Just then, plaster dust drifts down from the peephole overhead. They cling to each other in childlike fear of the unknown. Alan orders her to lock herself in her room while he searches the attic.

What Alan confronts in the attic and the unspeakable horror Caroline must ultimately face when she remembers and re-experiences what happened that night form the stunning action and terrifying conclusion of BLACKOUT.

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O V E R S E A S
F I L M G R O U P



BLACKOUT
A Film By
Douglas Adams

Screening: Thursday, 5 October, 8 p.m.
Raleigh Studios
Fairbanks screening room
5300 Melrose Avenue
Hollywood, CA.
(enter via Clinton Street gate)

Running time: 91 minutes

Opening date: Friday the 13th of October
AMC Kabuki 8 Theaters, San Francisco
AMC 14 Theaters, Century City, Los Angeles

**PSYCHO Screenwriter Joseph Stefano Returns with BLACKOUT,
A Terrifying Family Portrait**

When screenwriter Joseph Stefano wrote the 1960 Hitchcock thriller, Psycho, he had no idea that he was creating what would become the most revered classic in the genre of the psychological horror film. Thirty years later, Stefano brings us yet another terrifying tale centering around the theme of the mother/child bond gone berserk.

A psychologically disturbed young woman (Gail O'Grady) with dim, bizarre recollections of her childhood receives a cryptic message from her father--whom she supposedly murdered when she was a child. Who sent the message? Did she or did she not commit the crime? Is her father still alive? And why does her mother welcome her home with pursed lips, slurs and a shotgun?

Carol Lynley, the winsome, delicate beauty familiar to screen audiences of the 50s and 60s for her roles in films

BLACKOUT
Screening Alert
Page 2

like Blue Denim (1959), The Cardinal (1963), Bunny Lake is Missing (1965) and Harlow (1965), returns to the screen in new form as Esther, a mother who is hiding a horrible family secret.

Ambient Light Entertainment presents **Blackout**, a film directed, co-produced and with an original story by San Franciscan director Doug Adams. **Blackout** stars Carol Lynley, Gail O'Grady, Michael Keys Hall, Joseph Gian and Joanna Miles.

Joseph Stefano, who is currently at work on Psycho IV, for Universal, is in Los Angeles and available for interviews through mid-October. Interviews with director Doug Adams and **Blackout** cast members Carol Lynley, Gail O'Grady, Michael Keys Hall and Joseph Gian can also be coordinated through Cottrell + Lindeman Associates.

RSVP: COTTRELL/LINDEMAN
(213) 852-1877

"BLACKOUT" Production Notes

Following a four-year absence, a shy, troubled young woman named Caroline returns home after receiving an urgent letter from her father, who mysteriously -- and suddenly -- disappeared 14 years earlier.

When she arrives, however, her father is nowhere to be found. And no one has heard nor seen him in years.

Believing he's in trouble, Caroline sets out to find him. During her search, she experiences flashes of memory that are bizarre, violent, perverse. As these jarring glimpses into her past intensify, Caroline becomes convinced they are somehow related to her father's disappearance.

But why can't she remember?

Caroline's quest to solve the puzzle of her past takes her on a frightening journey leading to a shocking discovery ... a horrible family secret that sheds light on her blackout.

The idea for "Blackout" came from an event in the life of director Doug Adams -- the disappearance of his father for more than a year when Adams was a teenager. Adams and original co-writer Laura Ferguson expanded on this premise, making the main character a young woman struggling to find her father and to solve the riddle of her disturbing flashbacks.

"We were fascinated with the concept of an occurrence which could set off a series of nightmarish images relating to a traumatic event the heroine has been suppressing in her subconscious for years," Adams said, "and the total re-evaluation of her identity once she had learned the shocking truth."

Encouraged by fellow film entrepreneurs Joel and Ethan Coen ("Raising Arizona," "Blood Simple"), Adams directed a 12-minute 35mm promotional reel of his scripted project, and successfully raised the needed \$1.2 million budget. In 1987, Adams formed his own company, Ambient Light Entertainment to begin pre-production on "Blackout."

Shortly thereafter, Adams met Joseph Stefano, screenwriter of the horror classic "Psycho." Stefano was intrigued by the script's dark psychological implications. A few days after their meeting, Stefano proposed a twist to Adams's story.

"I wondered," Stefano said, "Suppose this beautiful, troubled young runaway received an urgent letter for help from her father who disappeared off the face of the earth 14 years earlier..." Adams was hooked. Stefano was immediately hired to rewrite the screenplay and co-produce the film.

"Blackout" also attracted other well-respected industry veterans, including casting director Penny Perry ("Ordinary People," "2010," "Running Scared"), editor-associate producer Zack Staenberg ("Police Academy," "Once Upon A Time In America"),

and Emmy-nominated composer Don Davis ("Beauty and the Beast").

Once a professional guitarist and compose himself, Adams took particular interest in the film's music. In addition to the music Davis composed for a 45-piece orchestra, Adams and Bill Champlin, the Grammy Award-winning composer, lead vocalist and keyboardist for the group "Chicago," also composed two original songs for "Blackout."

"In a suspense film if the music is not orchestrated properly, you might as well be making a romantic comedy," Adams said. "Going with Don Davis, the big orchestra, and mixing in stereo surround was a major step in our game plan: to deliver an 'A' picture on a 'B' budget."

Another key element was a realistic setting. The motion picture was shot almost entirely on location at a 120-year-old Victorian farm house in Santa Paula, California. Nestled among 10 acres of orange groves, the house and rural community reminded Adams of the haunting dichotomy he sees as inherent in the ageing small towns throughout the United States.

"The main street [in Santa Paula] hasn't changed since the late 1940s," Adams said. "It's one of the few towns which hasn't changed with the times due to economic stagnation. So, although in many ways it is as American as apple pie, the paint on the white picket fence is cracked and peeling. Visually, it was ideal for bringing out the underlying theme in the film: The darkness lurking just below the surface of rural Americana."

CAROL LYNLEY

("Esther Boyle")

The delicate, nymph-like beauty of Carol Lynley delighted film audiences of the 1950s and 60s. From the Walt Disney feature, The Light in the Forest (1958), to the controversial teen drama, Blue Denim (1959), to her intense dramatic portrayal of Jean Harlow in Harlow (1965), young American filmgoers grew up along with Lynley. She began her career in adolescent roles and matured into a popular leading lady, working with major directors like Otto Preminger (The Cardinal, Bunny Lake Is Missing) and Ronald Neame (The Poseidon Adventure), among others.

As Esther Boyle in Blackout, Lynley portrays a beautiful older woman with a sensual manner and a caustic sense of humor. The character of Esther is complex; part sinister, part alluring, she treats her troubled daughter Caroline with the rage and disdain she felt for the girl's father, even going so far as to reveal some brutal "facts" to Caroline about her childhood relationship with her father. Lynley welcomed the chance to delve into the character of Esther, in whom cruelty and charm are seductively intertwined.

Lynley has been in over 41 films and over 200 television shows. She currently divides her time between the East and West Coast.

GAIL O'GRADY

("Caroline Boyle")

"Caroline Boyle: 21 years old, Caroline dresses plainly and self-effacingly, doing little to consciously enhance her good looks and figure. 'She looks like a person who has gone through life...with an emotional limp.' A deeply troubled young woman who fled her childhood home four years ago, Caroline returns after receiving a cryptic letter from the father who supposedly abandoned her. While trying to trace the mystery of her origins, she's plunged into a nightmare of horror...."

FILMOGRAPHY

FILM:	SHE'S HAVING A BABY	- Dir: John Hughes
	THREE AMIGOS	- Dir: John Landis
	BLACKOUT	- Dir: Doug Adams
TELEVISION:	CHINA BEACH	- Dir: Rod Holcomb
	IN THE HEAT OF THE NIGHT	- Dir: Leo Penn (NBC)
	BILLIONAIRE BOYS CLUB	- Dir: Marvin Chomsky (NBC)
	MATLOCK	
THEATRE:	BUS STOP	- The Storm Fields Theatre
	THE GLASS MENAGERIE	- Ted Liss Rep. Theatre
	ROMEO AND JULIET	- Ted Liss Rep. Theatre
	SLUMMING	- Victoria Gardens Studios
TRAINING:	Peggy Feury	- The Loft
	Ted Liss Studios	- Chicago
	Jim Wortring	- Chicago
DANCE:	The Academy (Chicago) Ballet	

MICHAEL KEYS HALL

("Alan Boyle")

"Alan Boyle: Caroline's uncle, he's a tall, slender man of 39, still extremely handsome and magnetic. Alan radiates warmth, reassurance and gentleness. He's thrilled to see Caroline again, and welcomes her back despite the protestations of his sister Esther, Caroline's mother. However, under his guise of sweet understanding is a truly twisted, amoral, dangerous individual with a sick plan in mind for Caroline..."

FILMOGRAPHY

FILM:	BLACKOUT	- Dir: Doug Adams
TELEVISION:	CHEERS	
	WHO'S THE BOSS	
	DYNASTY	
	THE A TEAM	
	HIGHWAY TO HEAVEN	
	WHO'S THE BOSS	
	THE NIGHT THEY SAVED CHRISTMAS	
	ALL MY CHILDREN	
	ONE LIFE TO LIVE	
	GENERAL HOSPITAL	
	BEVERLY HILLS BUNTZ	
BROADWAY:	CHILDREN OF A LESSER GOD	- Dir: Gordon Davidson
OFF-BROADWAY:	DUCK AND COVER	- New York Theatre Studio
	THE QUILLING OF PRUE	- New York Theatre Studio
	FILIGREE PEOPLE	- White Barn Theatre

JOSEPH GIAN

("Luke Erickson")

"Luke Erickson: A bright, likeable 22 year old, he's charmingly sexy, a sensitive, appealing young man who was in love with Caroline before she ran away four years ago. His feelings for Caroline have never changed, and he's delighted when she comes back to town again. Even after Caroline freaks out and attacks him, Luke still wants her, and wants to help her through her time of personal pain and crisis...."

Joseph Gian is currently starring as Police Officer Rick Silardi in the well-received ABC-TV series "Hooperman" with John Ritter, and recently finished the romantic comedy "Mad About You". Additional credits include appearances in "Blue Skies Again," with Harry Hamlin and Mimi Rodgers, "A Night In Heaven," with Leslie Ann Warren, "The Nightstalker," and "Death Before Dishonor."

Gian was born in North Miami, Florida, and raised both there and in New York. Committed to growing as an artist, Gian relocated to Los Angeles in 1983 to actively pursue his acting and singing career. He began studying with such prominent acting coaches as Stella Adler, Peggy Feury, Kenneth McMillian and Joanne Baron, and with vocal instructors Brad Chapman and Seth Riggs. His studies resulted in his becoming a five-time vocalist champion and semi-finalist on "Star Search '86," and in his being cast as male lead in two Diana Ross music videos.

JOANNA MILES

("Eleanor Carpenter")

"Eleanor Carpenter: Angela's attractive mother, she's a complete recluse in her early 40's who looks 'much older and much younger at one and the same time.' Eccentric and more than a little 'strange,' Eleanor claims she was once in love with Caroline's father. She is attacked by a mysterious assailant and left for dead, but recovers consciousness long enough to give a grim warning...."

FILMOGRAPHY

FILM:	BLACKOUT	- Dir: Doug Adams
	AS IS	- Dir: Michael Lindsay-Hogg
	CROSS CREEK	- Dir: Martin Ritt
	GOLDEN GIRL	- Dir: Joe Sargent
	FRAGMENTS	- Dir: John Ballard
	THE BUG	- Dir: Jeannot Szwarc
	THE ULTIMATE WARRIOR	- Dir: Robert Clouse
	THE WAY WE LIVE NOW	- Dir: Barry Brown

TELEVISION:	RIGHT TO DIE
	ALL MY SONS
	THE SOUND OF MURDER
	PROMISE OF LOVE
	SOPHISTICATED GENTS
	A FIRE IN THE SKY
	HARVEST HOME
	THE TRIAL OF CAPTAIN JENSEN
	BORN INNOCENT
	ALOHA MEANS GOODBYE
	THE GLASS MENAGERIE
	IN WHAT AMERICA
	MY MOTHER'S HOUSE
	TURN THE KEY DEFTLY
	THE INTRUDER
	ST. ELSEWHERE
	CAGNEY & LACEY
	DALLAS
	TRAPPER JOHN M.D.
	BARNEY MILLER
	ALL MY CHILDREN

JOANNA MILES Filmography, continued

TELEVISION: THE SECRET STORM
FLAME IN THE WIND
THE EDGE OF NIGHT
THE NURSES
EDDIE CAPRA MYSTERIES
BARNABY JONES
DARKROOM

THEATRE: DEBUTANTE BALL - South Coast Repertory
PRIVATE OPENING - New Dramatists
THE WAKEFIELD PLAYS - New Dramatists/Actors Studio
KRAMER - Center Theatre Group/Taper 2
DYLAN
SKI BUM
ONE NIGHT STANDS OF A NOISY PASSENGER
DANCING FOR THE KAISER
HAVING FUN IN THE BATHROOM
NIAGARA FALLS
DRACULA
DRUMS IN THE NIGHT
DIRTY HANDS

AWARDS: Emmy Award: Best Supporting Actress "THE GLASS
MENAGERIE"
Super Emmy: Women in Radio and TV "THE GLASS
MENAGERIE"
Eleanora Duse Award: The Actor's Studio Award for
Achievement

DEENA FREEMAN

("Angela Carpenter")

"Angela Carpenter: 21 years old, she was Caroline's best friend until she left town. She works in a gas station pumping gas and may need to lose a couple of pounds. Angela is a very pretty, open young woman who is delighted when Caroline returns. When she's later trying to protect Caroline from danger, she is herself brutally slain...."

DOUG ADAMS

Director, Co-Producer

Doug Adams hails from San Francisco, California and received his B.A. in Communications from the University of California at Berkeley.

Doug has an extensive musical background, and before being bitten by the film bug he performed professionally as a guitarist in clubs and festivals throughout the U.S., Canada and Europe. A member of A.S.C.A.P., Doug has produced, composed and performed on several soundtracks, including Warner Brothers's Mike's Murder starring Debra Winger.

In BLACKOUT, he composed two original songs with the group "Chicago's" lead vocalist/key-boardist Bill Champlin, a two-time Grammy Award-winning composer.

Doug moved to Los Angeles and attended the American Film Institute as a Cinematography Fellow in 1978. It was there that he was bitten by the bug when he directed a thirty-minute videotape adaptation of Cornell Woolrich's suspense classic "3 O'Clock." Transferring to the M.F.A. program at U.C.L.A., he continued to direct sort films and theater under the tutelage of Mike McClain, Bill Duke and Milton Katselas.

He then worked for a year as a story analyst for Martin Ransohoff at Columbia Pictures, and freelanced within the industry as an assistant director, writer and composer. He and Connecticut-

born writing partner Laura Ferguson wrote FORBIDDEN IMAGES, a feature thriller that was to become the basis for BLACKOUT. Doug shot a companion 35mm "promo reel" of the film-to-be, then went out with his "sales package" and raised the \$1.2 million production budget.

JOSEPH STEFANO

Screenwriter

Joseph Stefano's multi-faceted career in the entertainment industry has spanned over four decades, and has included everything from Broadway shows to film features, television series and novels. Stefano's first Broadway play, It's Your Move, boasted music and direction by the 26 year-old author, and was produced at the prestigious Provincetown Playhouse in 1946. (A former song and dance man, Stefano's songs have been performed by such notable entertainers as Sammy Davis, Jr., Eydie Gorme and George Shearing.)

In 1960, Stefano's screenplay for the Alfred Hitchcock masterpiece, PSYCHO, established him as the writer of what many consider the definitive psychological thriller of the American cinema. Stefano went on to enjoy a highly successful career as a writer/producer in both film and television, and created several well-known TV series, among them "Mr. Novak," "The Magician," "The Outer Limits" and "Star Trek: The Next Generation."

Stefano is currently at work on PSYCHO IV for Universal Studios. In this prequel to the original Pyscho, Norman Bates' history is revealed from childhood on. Stefano has recently completed a new screenplay, TWO BITS, about his own youth in Philadelphia, which will be produced by multi-Academy Award winner Arthur Cohn. In addition, Stefano's novel, The Lycanthrope, which has been six years in the writing, is scheduled for a 1990 release by Delacorte Press.

JOSEPH STEFANO
(Writer/Producer)

(Partial Credits)

FILM: TWO BITS
BLACKOUT
THE KINDRED
FUTZ
EYE OF THE CAT
THE NAKED EDGE
FAST AND SEXY
PSYCHO
THE BLACK ORCHID

TELEVISION: SNOWBEAST
LIVE AGAIN, DIE AGAIN
HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS
A DEATH OF INNOCENCE
REVENGE
THE COMMITTEEMAN
THE YOUNG JUGGLER
MADE IN JAPAN

PILOTS/SERIES: STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION
THE MAGICIAN
THE OUTER LIMITS
MR. NOVAC

AWARDS: Robert E. Sherwood Award - MADE IN JAPAN
Mystery Writers of America/ Best Film - PSYCHO

ZACK STAENBERG

(Editor)

Zack Staenberg is a native of New Jersey. He attended the University of Wisconsin in Madison. Staenberg was working on commercials and industrial films in Chicago when he landed a job as a production assistant for "The Fury" which was filming on location in Chicago.

He was next hired to assist the editors on "Omen Part II." He moved to Los Angeles to continue his work in editing, which began a four year assistantship with editors on such films as: "Roadie"; "Looking to Get Out," a Hal Ashby film; "The Chosen," a Jeremy Kagan film; "Tex," the directorial debut of Tim Hunter; the film "Twilight Zone," the segment directed by George Miller; and "Police Academy."

Staenberg also edited Robert Harmon's debut short film, "China Lake," which caused quite a stir in the industry.

**"'BLACKOUT'
is good, scary,
gripping fun."**

"'BLACKOUT,' much like 'PSYCHO,' has plenty of creepy touches to push you to the edge of your seat and keep you there. Joseph Stefano, who wrote the screenplay for both films, recycled some of the Hitchcock classic's spookiest bits for his newest work...Directed by Doug Adams, co-producer and the co-writer of the original screenplay on which Mr. Stefano based his script, 'BLACKOUT' gets your adrenalin and your curiosity up from the first few moments.

Mr. Adams has a knack for shooting deliciously spooky sequences, the kind that make you squirm apprehensively in your seat for long, tense moments as you wait for terror to strike."

-The Washington Times

**"Director
Adams displays
elegant touches
of style..."**

-Variety

AMBIENT LIGHT ENTERTAINMENT PRESENTS A DOUG ADAMS FILM "BLACKOUT"

STARRING CAROL LYNLEY · GAIL O'GRADY · MICHAEL KEYS HALL · JOSEPH GIAN AND JOANNA MILES AS ELEANOR

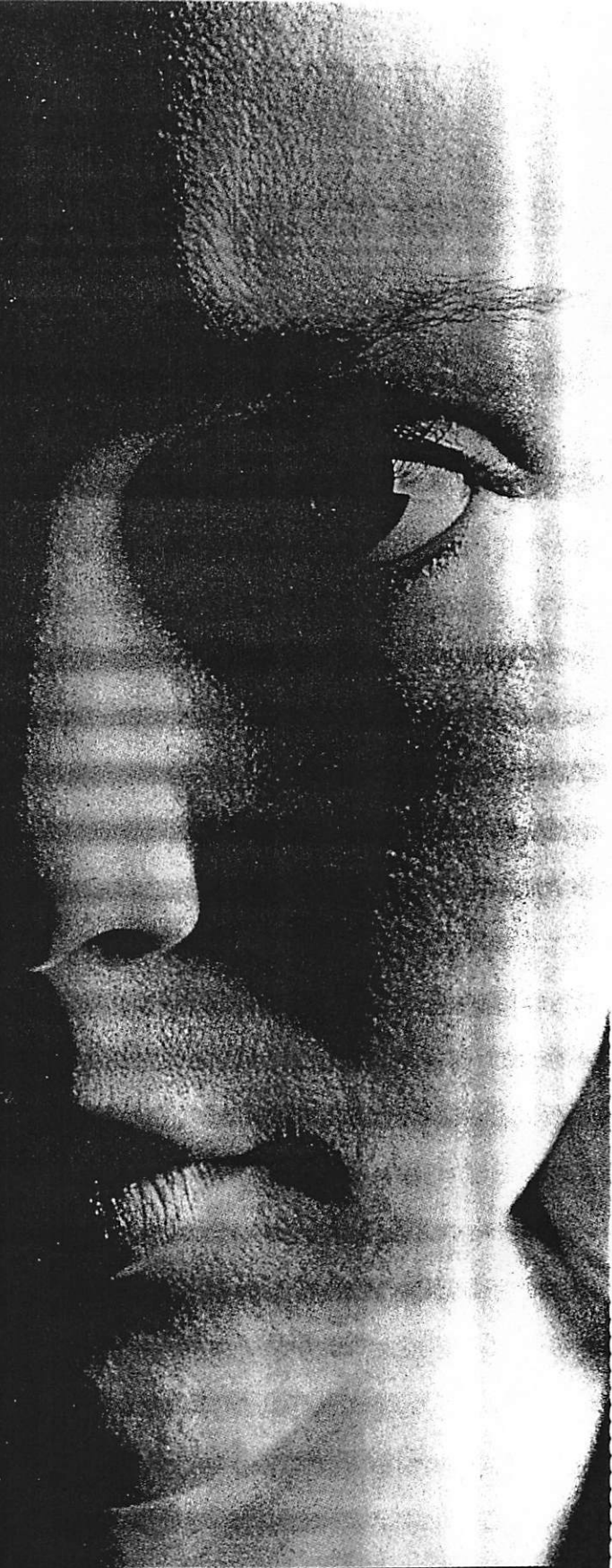
EDITOR ZACH STAENBERG MUSIC BY DON DAVIS DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY ARLEDGE ARMENAKI

SCREENPLAY BY JOSEPH STEFANO ASSOCIATE PRODUCER ZACH STAENBERG LINE PRODUCER HERMAN GRIGSBY

PRODUCED BY DOUG ADAMS AND JOSEPH STEFANO DIRECTED BY DOUG ADAMS ©1988 By Forbidden Images Ltd. RECORDED IN **ULTRA-STEREO**

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CINETEX

Blackout

(Suspenser — Color)

An Ambient Light Entertainment presentation. Produced by Doug Adams, Joseph Stefano. Line producer, Herman Grigsby. Directed by Adams. Screenplay by Stefano, based on an original screenplay by Adams, Laura Ferguson, Cynthia Williams. Camera (color), Arledge Armenaki; editor, associate producer, Zach Staenberg; music, Don Davis; production design, Peter Kanter; set decoration, Effie Rosen; costume design, Trudy Kapner; sound (Ultra-Stereo); Gerald Wolfe; assistant director, D. K. Miller; casting, Penny Perry, Meagan Branman. Reviewed at the Cinetex Film Festival, Las Vegas, Sept. 27, 1988. No MPAA Rating. Running time: 91 min.

Mother Carol Lynley
 Caroline Boyle Gail O'Grady
 Uncle Alan Michael Keys Hall
 Luke Joseph Gian
 Angela Deena Freeman
 Eleanor Carpenter Joanna Miles

LAS VEGAS — "Blackout" poses the question of whether long-dead Daddy is in the attic, and coming from the pen of "Psycho" scripter Joseph Stefano, the question is a creepy one. A combination of old-style scare melodrama and new-fangled gory shock, first feature by Doug Adams is well-mounted hokum that might be exploited for its violent disturbed-young-woman angle to modest profits.

Beautiful, demure Caroline Boyle (Gail O'Grady) returns to her small Northern California hometown upon receiving a note from her father, who had mysteriously disappeared seven years earlier, when the girl was 14. Her mother (Carol Lynley) is none too happy to see her, as her daughter reminds her of the man she so despises, but local boy Luke is delighted and picks up courting Caroline where he left off before she left several years earlier.

Caroline hears weird noises coming from upstairs and experiences jarring memory flashes of a long-suppressed incident from her childhood, which Mother, in an attempt to get rid of the kid, finally explains stem from Caroline having been molested by Dad, then killing him.

The favored weapon in this bedevilled clan is a screwdriver, which Luke discovers to his misfortune when he tries to put the make on the comely Caroline. Two neighbors meet undeserved ends in the course of her investigation into what really happened to dear old Dad, which unavoidably throws suspicion upon Uncle Alan, Mother's housemate of long standing.

(Continued on Page 12, Column 1)

CINETEX FILM REVIEWS

Blackout

(Continued from Page 6, Column 1)

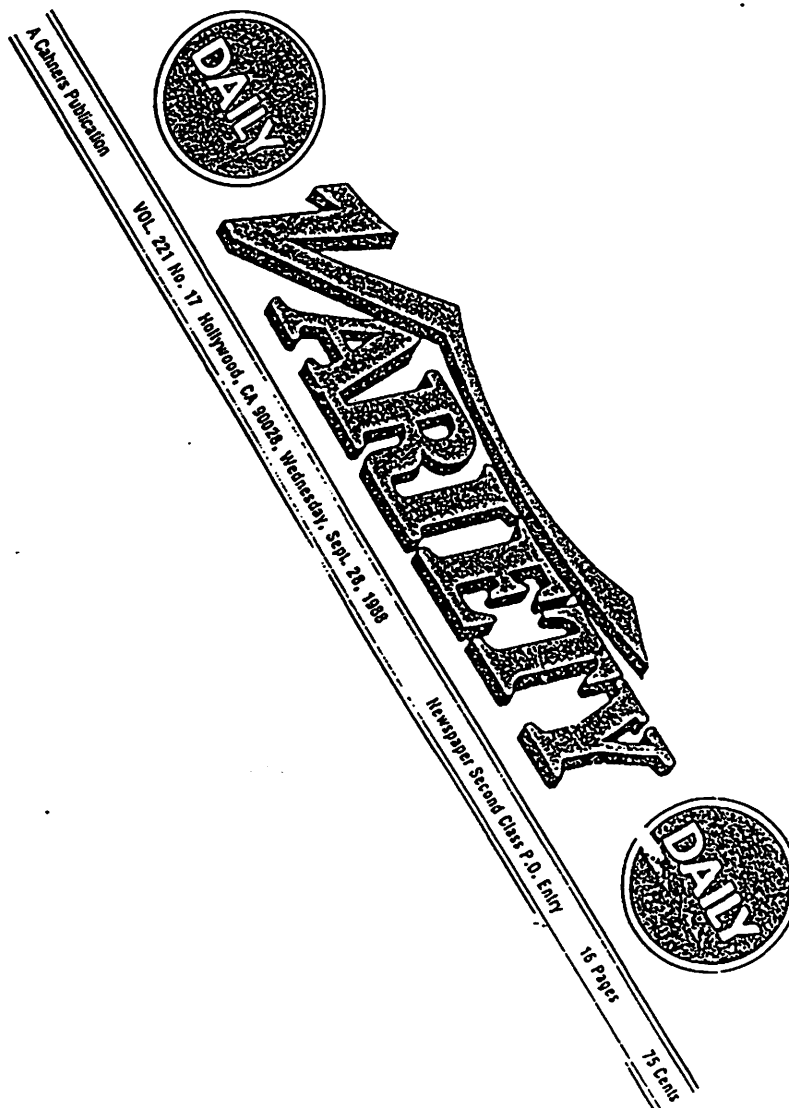
Plotting is sometimes farfetched, and presentation of the heavily expository material is exceedingly deliberate. Shock cuts or graphic violence work like sudden jolts of electricity — they're crude, but they do the job.

O'Grady, who could just about pass for Greta Scacchi's sister, makes for an unusually quiet, retreating leading character, but she maintains a steady resolve in the

face of all the adverse occurrences. Try as he might to play it straight, Michael Keys Hall can't help being weird as Uncle Alan.

Director Adams displays elegant touches of style to go along with some of the more plodding moments, and shows some promise, as does lenser Arledge Armenaki. Don Davis' music, quite effective in its more melodious sections, comes on too strong in the horrific scenes.

Cart.



MOVIES / Lucy Keyser

'Blackout': Gripping, scary fun

"Blackout," much like "Psycho," has plenty of creepy touches to push you to the edge of your seat and keep you there. Joseph Stefano, who wrote the screenplay for both films, recycled some of the Hitchcock classic's spookiest bits for his newest work, playing Thursday at the American Film Institute.

There's the spectre of a dead relative on the premises, a peephole for spying on a shapely female visitor, a crotchety mother who appears in an upstairs window, overheard arguments about the visitor, sex as naughty business and loads of suspense-laden scenes with people sneaking around corridors, up stairs and behind chairs.

A number of thrilling moments in "Blackout" are courtesy of the leading lady's sporadic flashbacks, which are accompanied by jolting sound effects and music. Many of the flashbacks are triggered by the sight of blood and screwdrivers.

The flashbacks are from a key grisly incident that the main character, a shy and nubile young woman named Caroline, has blacked out of her memory. The girl, played by Gail O'Grady, has returned to her childhood home on an orange grove. She is summoned there by a cryptic letter from her father, who abandoned her and her



Gail O'Grady and Michael Keys Hall in "Blackout"

mother when she was a child.

Directed by Doug Adams, co-producer and the co-writer of the original screenplay on which Mr. Stefano based his script, "Blackout" gets your adrenalin and your curiosity up from the first few moments.

Caroline's mother, played by Carol Lynley in a mean and nasty performance, welcomes her daughter home with pursed lips, slurs and a shotgun. Why does this woman hate her own child so much and where is the father who wrote the letter? And what's the deal with this very friendly Uncle Allen who lives with his sister (Caroline's mom) in the big house?

In searching for her father, Caroline finds skeletons in the closet, including an old sweetheart of her father's who tells the girl about her

father's poetry. Her dad's old lover doubts the father really abandoned his daughter and instead suspects he disappeared through foul play.

Soon, Caroline hears noises in the attic, sees shadows in the orange grove, imagines faces at the window. Her flashbacks are becoming more frequent and her dad's old girlfriend meets with foul play herself.

Next she hears from Mom that she was molested by her father, which could explain Caroline's intense brush-off when her old high-school beau tries to kiss her. Mom has a follow-up tale about the father that makes Caroline responsible for his disappearance.

To reveal any more of the plot would spoil the grand and perverted ending when Caroline's

★★★

WHAT: "Blackout"

RATING: NR (violence, brief nudity)

CAST: Carol Lynley (the mother), Gail O'Grady (Caroline), Michael Keys Hall (Uncle Allen), Joseph Gian (Luke), Deena Freeman (Angela)

PRODUCTION: Directed by Doug Adams, produced by Mr. Adams and Joseph Stefano, written by Mr. Stefano, photography by Arledge Armenaki, music by Don Davis, editing by Zach Staenberg, from an original screenplay by Mr. Adams. Laura Ferguson and Cynthia Williams, with Ambient Light Entertainment, print courtesy of Thomas F.R. Garvin

TIME: 95 minutes

WHERE: American Film Institute at the Kennedy Center

WHEN: 6:30 p.m. Thursday

MAXIMUM RATING: FOUR STARS

Mr. Adams has a knack for shooting deliciously spooky sequences — the kind that make you squirm apprehensively in your seat for long, tense moments as you wait for terror to strike.

On the other hand, he zooms in sometimes on the oddest things — a cup of tea, an irate customer at the local garage, a pan of fried eggs, the switch on a piece of farming equipment. The cuts tend to either raise false suspicion or simply interrupt the flow.

Sound effects are quite good, including the stabbing puncture noises that were wonderfully awful. The background music for a night chase scene through the grove is particularly hair-raising.

Sometimes the dialogue and the acting are a bit stilted and staged, but for the most part "Blackout" is